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Breastfeeding practices among mothers of infants in Peringara Panchayat in Pathanamthitta District

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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed to assess the breastfeeding practices among mothers of infants in Peringara Gramapanchayat in Kerala. Study was a community based cross-sectional study among mothers of infants in Peringara gramapanchayat using a pretested questionnaire. 142 breastfeeding mothers of infants in Peringara gramapanchayat were studied and mothers who were not present at home during the study were excluded from the study. Study period consisted of 18 days between December 2015 and January 2016. Study variables includes type of delivery, initiation of breastfeeding, breastfeeding practices and role of ASHAs in promoting good breastfeeding practices. Statistical analysis was done using Pearson's Chi-square test and T test. The study found that exclusive breastfeeding has been done by 68.3% of mothers. There is no practice of giving pre-lacteal feed, 95.8% of mothers have given colostrum to the new born. Statistically significant association was found between the type of delivery and time of initiation of breastfeeding ($p < 0.05$). Time of initiation of breastfeeding was prolonged in case of Caesarean section. 49.3% of mothers have breastfed the baby within one hour. 55.6% of mothers were informed about importance of breastfeeding by ASHAs and only 20.4% of mothers were informed about period of exclusive breastfeeding and period of complimentary feeding by ASHAs.

Key words: Exclusive Breastfeeding, Caesarean section, ASHAs.

INTRODUCTION

Under nutrition is estimated to be the cause of majority of child death, i.e. about 45% of all child deaths. Optimal breastfeeding is so critical that it could reduce under five mortality rates.^[1] WHO has taken many steps to improve the breastfeeding in infants especially in their first six months like adoption of International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk

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Substitutes in 1981 and implementation of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in 1991.^[2]

Kerala has successfully implemented Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and became the first baby friendly state in the world,^[3] but the percentage of children exclusively breastfed during the first six months of life were only 56 % according to NFHS-3.^[4] Practice of prelacteal feed is also a cause of concern. Study by Salve Dawal et.al. (2003) found that 42.7% practiced pre-lacteal feeds.^[5] A study done by Girish H. O. et.al. (2013) in Kerala found out that 59.4% of mothers who delivered previously had given pre-lacteal feed for their new-borns and most commonly given pre-lacteal feed was zam-zam water.^[6]

These statistics shows that although global initiatives to promote breastfeeding has successfully implemented in hospitals in Kerala, the feeding practices followed by the mothers are inappropriate may be due to several reasons like lack of awareness regarding proper breastfeeding practices or lack of

adequate support and confidence during the period of breastfeeding. Looking into the importance of breastfeeding, the present study is conducted.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To assess the breastfeeding practices among mothers of infants in Peringara gramapanchayat in Pathanamthitta district and to assess the activities of ASHAs regarding giving information about proper breastfeeding practices.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A community based cross-sectional study was conducted in rural area of Peringara gramapanchayat from December 2015 to January 2016. The study was conducted among all breastfeeding mothers in the panchayat who were present in the house during the visit. A sample size of 142 was used in the study. The list of breastfeeding mothers in each ward of the panchayat was obtained from the ASHA of the respective ward. The data analysis was done using appropriate statistical principles and associations was assessed by means of Pearson’s Chi-square and the p-value was set at 5 percent for significance and two-tailed test was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study group, there were 61 infants below six months of age and 81 infants above six months of age. Among the 61, 31.7% (45) of infants are receiving exclusive breastfeeding and out of 81 infants above six months of age, 36.6% (52) have received exclusive breastfeeding. Of the 44 infants who are not exclusively breastfed, the major reason found out for stopping exclusive breastfeeding before six months is the decreased breast milk production (21.8%).

Table 1: Period of exclusive breastfeeding to the infant

Period of giving exclusive breastfeeding	Number of mothers	Percentage
Till six months	52	36.6

Aged below six months, stopped exclusive breastfeeding	16	11.3
Aged below six month, but still on exclusive breastfeeding.	45	31.7
Aged above six months, still on exclusive breastfeeding.	0	0.0
Aged above six months, stopped exclusive breastfeeding before six months.	29	20.4
Total	142	100.0

49.3% of mothers initiated breastfeeding within one hour of delivering the baby as recommended by WHO. In the study, time of initiation of breastfeeding is found prolonged after a Caesarean section. The association between the type of delivery and time of initiation of breastfeeding was statistically significant (p-value<0.05). 76.4% of mothers who had a normal vaginal delivery were able to breastfeed their baby within one hour. Only 24.3% of mothers who had LSCS initiated breastfeeding within the first hour of delivery.

Figure 1: Shows the percentage of babies in each age group.

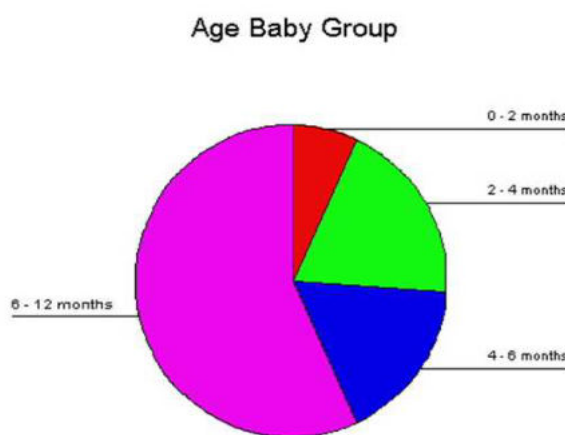


Table 2 : Distribution of mothers according to the type of delivery

Type of delivery	Number of mothers	Percentage
FTNVD	68	47.9
LSCS	74	52.1
Total	142	100.0

Table 3 : Initiation of breastfeeding after delivery

Time of initiation of breastfeeding after delivery	Number of mothers	Percentage
Within one hour	70	49.3
Within 1-3 hours	23	16.2
Within one day	17	12.0
After one day	32	22.5
Total	142	100.0

Table 4: Association between time of initiation of breastfeeding and type of delivery

Time of initiation of breastfeeding after delivery	FTNVD	LSCS
Within one hour	52	18
Within 1-3 hours	10	13
Within one day	1	17
After one day	5	27

95.8% mothers in the study group had given colostrum to the infant. There was no practice of giving any pre-lacteal feed to the new born among mothers in the study group. Breast milk substitute was given to the new-borns by 31% of mothers

prelacteal. Several earlier studies had revealed prelacteal feeding to the new-born.

55.6% mothers were visited by ASHA worker of the respective area and are explained by them about proper breastfeeding practices and importance of breastfeeding. But 44.3% mothers are not given information about proper breastfeeding practices by ASHAs. Only 20.4% mothers were explained about the period of exclusive breastfeeding and time of complementary feeding by the ASHAs. ASHAs are a connecting link between main health system and community.

CONCLUSION

Exclusive breastfeeding has been done by 68.3% mothers. There was no practice of giving any prelacteal feed to the newborn. 95.8% mothers in the study group had given colostrum to the new-born. 49.3% of mothers initiated breastfeeding within one hour of delivering the baby as recommended by WHO. Initiation of breastfeeding is found to be prolonged in case of Caesarean section. 55.6% mothers were visited by ASHAs explained about positioning, latching etc. Only 20.4% mothers were explained about the period of exclusive breastfeeding and time of complementary feeding by the ASHAs.

The study found that awareness regarding the importance of exclusive breastfeeding is not adequate among the mothers. The study also shows that the benefits of ASHAs had not reached the community properly. It seems that there has to be improved supervision on the activities of ASHA workers regarding giving proper breastfeeding practices and proper counselling has to be given to the mothers about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of infant life.

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